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DOI:
10.1080/0046760X.2020.1753827

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):
Roberts, S 2020, 'Cultivating an ‘earthly paradise’: nature, informal education, and the contested politics of youth citizenship, 1910s-1940s', *History of Education*, vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 498-516.
https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2020.1753827

Cultivating an 'earthly paradise': nature, informal education, and the contested politics of youth citizenship, 1910s-1940s

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Abstract:

This article discusses contested discourses of youth citizenship in Birmingham UK in the early twentieth century. It explores how socially committed Quakers and labour and co-operative activists in the city drew on transnational social and political critiques of the urban, and a powerful discourse of nature as facilitator of a morally and physically healthier citizen, to adopt pedagogical responses aimed at securing a more peaceful and egalitarian world. Taking the British Camp Fire Girls and a local fellowship of the Woodcraft Folk as case studies, the article considers the role of the natural world in the pedagogy of youth citizenship, and how organisational rhetoric at a national level was translated into practice locally. It analyses the political and religious motivations of the adult educators and social reformers who developed these initiatives, and argues that suburban south Birmingham provided a very particular pedagogical landscape in which alternative conceptualisations of youth citizenship were possible.

Key words: youth citizenship, informal learning, Quakers, co-operative movement, Woodcraft Folk, Camp Fire Girls, Birmingham

> In the inner Wards [sic], owing to fumes and soot and lack of sunshine, plants do not thrive. In street after street, there cannot be seen a blade of grass or a leaf of a tree – nothing but streets and bricks and a blanket of smoky sky […] Supposing we had been born and bred in a congested area? Supposing that as kiddies we had toddled round this yard, and poked our fingers in its refuse? Supposing we had been educated in a black-listed school? Supposing that as adolescents our environment had consisted largely of dreary factories, dark courts, blank walls and boarded windows? Should we be where we are today?[1]

These words were written for a campaign leaflet published in 1930 by 'The Birmingham Crusade', an ecumenical religious campaign promoting urban reform. Its author was the Birmingham City Councillor Albert Bradbeer, a Quaker socialist, teetotal vegetarian, and former imprisoned Conscientious Objector.[2] Powerfully illustrated with photographs of

[1] A.F. Bradbeer, *A Spot Light on Birmingham* (Birmingham: The Birmingham Crusade, 1930), Barrow family papers, collection in private hands.

[2] Born into a working class family in Stoke Newington in 1890, Bradbeer attended the London School of Economics before moving to Birmingham in 1913 where he was employed by the chocolate manufacturers

children living and playing in the midst of urban deprivation, it articulated the author's belief in the connections between the physical environment of urban poverty and the physical and moral development of the city's future citizens. Deploring the circumstances in which children had to find their 'earthly paradise' playing in the corner of a dirty urban yard, he asked 'Why not … take our factories and our people out into the country?'[3]

Bradbeer's rhetoric captures an utopian vision of the potential of education to address social injustices, and to bring about a new and more peaceful world that was shared by socially committed members of the Religious Society of Friends (also known as Quakers) and labour and co-operative activists in Birmingham during the first half of the twentieth century. Underpinning this vision were long established social and political critiques of the urban and the industrial, complemented by powerful contemporary discourses of nature as educator, and producer of a morally and physically healthier populace.[4] These discourses were far from new in 1930. David Pomfret and others have identified a growing emphasis on the health of the young which conceptualised the urban as problematic, and resulted in a pro-rural discourse among a broad range of educationalists, health professionals and voluntary philanthropic workers in this period.[5] It was a sentiment that informed a broad range of educational interventions, from children's holiday schemes and open air schools to work camps for the unemployed, and were transnational discourses which found similar expression across the colonies of the former British Empire, in North America and in European countries in the same period, notably Germany.[6] From the early twentieth century

Cadbury and became involved in local politics. He was later part of a Quaker committee that campaigned and worked for improved working class housing in the city, see Birmingham Archives and Collections (hereafter BA&C) Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting Housing Committee, SF/2/1/1/4/12. For details of his public career see his obituary in the *Birmingham Post* 15 March 1963, 3. Both Bradbeer and his brother Frank Gilbert Bradbeer are listed on Cyril Pearce's National Database of Conscientious Objectors in the First World War, see https://search.livesofthefirstworldwar.org/record?id=GBM/CONSOBJ/8104 (accessed 6 August 2018).

[3] Bradbeer, op. cit..

[4] David Prynn, 'The Woodcraft Folk and the Labour Movement 1925-70', *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, no. 1 (1983): 79-95; David Pomfret, 'The city of evil and the great outdoors: the modern health movement and the urban young, 1918-40', *Urban History* 28, no. 3 (2001): 405-27.

[5] Pomfret, op. cit..

[6] John Field, 'An Anti-Urban Education? Work Camps and Ideals of the Land in Interwar Britain', *Rural History* 23, no. 2 (2012): 213-228; Bernhard Dietz, 'Countryside-versus-City in European Thought: German and British Anti-Urbanism between the Wars', *European Legacy* 13, no. 7 (2008): 801-814. See also Frank Trentmann, 'Civilization and Its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the Transformation of Anti-Modernism in Twentieth-Century Western Culture', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29, no. 4 (1994): 583-625; Michael John Mertens, 'Early Twentieth Century Youth Movements, Nature and Community in Britain and Germany', PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2000.

these discourses combined with new psychological ideas relating to the young, and to the recently discovered category of the adolescent in particular,[7] resulting in the development of youth movements that aimed to remove the young from the perceived dangers of the urban environment, and utilise the countryside as a site in which to develop physically, morally and intellectually fit citizens of the future. A growing historiographical literature has focused on the role played by the natural world and outdoor activities in the pedagogical ethos and practice of these organisations, and how camping in particular was understood as an effective means of inculcating the principles of citizenship.[8] The precise model of citizenship envisioned, however, became a highly contested space, as concerns among educationalists and social activists who objected to the perceived militarist and imperialist stance of organisations such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides sought to develop their own radical alternatives.[9]

The rich and emerging literature on youth movements, citizenship and the natural world has largely focused on the national manifestations of these youth organisations. In contrast, this study will consider how these developments and contestations played out at a local level in a suburban locale in one British city, Birmingham. It will explore two youth groups, the Camp Fire Girls and the Woodcraft Folk. The first was developed by local women members of a particular faith group, the Religious Society of Friends, and the second emerged in the context of the local co-operative and labour movement. Although small in comparison to the mainstream youth groups of the period, they provide two case studies enabling an exploration of the contested discourses of youth citizenship at a local level. The article will explore how and why particular groups of voluntary workers and social reformers developed

[7]Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1981); Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, Class and the Male Youth Problem, 1880-1920* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

[8] Kenny Cupers, 'Governing through nature: camps and youth movements in interwar Germany and the United States', *Cultural Geographies* 15 (2008): 173-205. There is an extensive and growing historiography on youth movements, citizenship and the outdoors in this period, see among others Paul Wilkinson, 'English Youth Movements, 1908-30', *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 2 (1969): 3-23; Tammy Proctor, *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain* (American Philosophical Society: Philadelphia, 2002); Sharon Wall, *The Nurture of Nature: Childhood, Antimodernism, and Ontario Summer Camps, 1920-55* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009); Sarah Mills, 'Scouting for Girls? Gender and the Scout Movement in Britain', *Gender, Place and Culture* 18, no. 4 (2011): 537-556; Kristine Alexander, *Guiding Modern Girls: Girlhood, Empire, and Internationalism in the 1920s and 1930s* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017); Sian Edwards, *Youth Movements, Citizenship and the English Countryside: Creating Good Citizens, 1930-1960* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[9] Prynn, op. cit., 80.

alternative groups for the young through a consideration of their political and religious motivations, and the politics of class and gender which informed them. In particular, it will focus on how the natural world served as a politicised space for the foundation of their alternative visions of citizenship and their pedagogy. It will argue that a convergence of anti-urban sentiment, together with specific understandings of non-conformist faith on the one hand and radical political beliefs on the other, resulted in the evolution of a particular educational landscape which facilitated different conceptualisations of youth citizenship.

Methodologically this article draws on a reading of archival sources from local and national repositories, and the interpretation will explore the intersection of the local and national dimensions for two reasons. Firstly, the archival records at a local level are fragmentary and therefore need to be read and contextualised in dialogue with material circulated at the national level. Secondly, in the case of the Camp Fire Girls the local initiators went on to lead the national British Camp Fire Girls organisation in its early decades, and the national records therefore provide a significant insight into their motivation and beliefs. This paper also draws on geographical and spatial thinking about place as an 'open and porous' product of social relations, which extends beyond the local and is always under construction.[10] The article will therefore begin by mapping the particular characteristics of the local place. It will consider how concerns about the urban were manifested and inscribed in the local social, political and physical context. The emphasis will then shift to a detailed consideration of both organisations to ask what type of citizen were they trying to produce? And how did the natural world contribute to their pedagogy?

Urban slums and rural idylls: the evolution of a pedagogical landscape

As Susannah Wright has convincingly argued, a discourse of urban poverty was highly influential in the mixed economy of educational and welfare provision in Birmingham from the late nineteenth century, and the evils of the slum were a recurring theme in public discourse, regularly appearing in the press in debates and features such as the series 'Scenes

[10] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 5; Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2005).

in Slum-land' written by James Cuming Walters in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* in 1901.[11] In a similar vein, Clare Hickman has recently discussed the influence of 'medical-moral discourse' on the evolution of a therapeutic landscape of medical and educational institutions in South Birmingham and the neighbouring county of Worcestershire in the early twentieth century.[12] South Birmingham was also home to Bournville, arguably the best known manifestation of ruralist anti-urbanism in the Birmingham area, and where Bradbeer lived and worked. Established as a garden suburb by the Quaker chocolate manufacturers and philanthropists George and Richard Cadbury from 1895, Bournville was closely associated with a very particular understanding of Englishness which venerated the rural, and exemplified the belief that a healthy, rural environment, combined with organised educational and welfare provision, would benefit the inhabitants' physical fitness and their moral and spiritual health.[13] As George Cadbury argued in 1907, '[t]hrough my experience among the back streets of Birmingham I have been brought to the conclusions that it is impossible to raise a nation, morally, physically and spiritually in such surroundings, and that the only effective way is to bring men out of the cities into the country and to give every man his garden where he can come into touch with nature and thus know more of nature's God.'[14] Accordingly the 'village' was carefully planned on paternalistic principles, and George and his second wife Elizabeth Cadbury exercised a benevolent surveillance over Bournville and its inhabitants.[15]

Bournville and the neighbouring suburbs of Stirchley and Selly Oak underwent considerable development during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and evolved into a very particular educational landscape on which both Quakers and co-operative

[11] Susannah Wright, 'The work of teachers and others in and around a Birmingham slum school 1891-1920', *History of Education* 38, no 6. (2009): 729-46.
[12] Clare Hickman, 'Care in the countryside: the theory and practice of therapeutic landscapes in the early twentieth century', in *Gardens and Green Spaces in the West Midlands since 1700*, eds. Malcolm Dick and Elaine Mitchell (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2018), 160-85.
[13] Standish Meacham, *Regaining Paradise: Englishness and the Early Garden City Movement* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 5; David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016).
[14] Quoted in Meacham, op. cit., 23.
[15] For a discussion of how the how the Cadbury story has been presented and mythologised over time see John R. Bryson and Philippa A. Lowe, 'Story-telling and history construction: rereading George Cadbury's Bournville Model Village', *Journal of Historical Geography* 28, no. 1 (2002): 21-41. See also Elizabeth Outka, *Consuming Traditions: Modernity, Modernism and the Commodified Authentic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). On paternalism and Bournville see Adrian R. Bailey, 'Constructing a Model Community: Institutions, Paternalism and Social Identities in Bournville, 1879-1939', PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2002; on Elizabeth Cadbury's educational and social activism see Helen Smith, 'Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury (1858-1951): religion, maternalism and social reform in Birmingham, 1888-1914', PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2012.

and labour activists had a significant physical, moral and intellectual influence. This influence was manifested and exercised in part through their establishment of, and active involvement in, a number of pedagogical institutions and communities of interest. The area was home to a numerically small but highly influential and largely middle class Quaker community. From the middle of the nineteenth century men from this faith community wielded influence in business and the formal structures of local government, while both male and female Friends were active in numerous philanthropic and charitable bodies. From the late nineteenth and early twentieth century women Friends also became increasingly influential in local educational interventions, including the adult school and kindergarten movements, and a small group occupied seats on city council committees that dealt with health, child welfare, and education, initially as unelected co-opted members and later as elected city councillors.[16] The influence of the Cadbury family in founding Bournville has already been noted, and largely through the energies of the family and its extended kinship network, a number of progressive educational establishments had been founded in the area. These included Woodbrooke Educational Settlement (founded 1903), Kingsmead Missionary Training College (1905), Westhill Training College for Sunday School Workers (1907), and Fircroft College for working men (1909).[17] Together with Bournville, these institutions functioned as a magnet which attracted a certain type of Quaker to the area - committed to their faith, socially reformist, and often politically left leaning.

The area was also home to a lively labour and co-operative scene. The Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society (TASCOS) had been founded in 1875 and by 1914 had a membership of 8,142.[18] It covered a large geographical area in the south of the city and actively promoted a politically informed adult education for its working class members.[19] Both communities of interest, Quakers and the labour movement, were active in the same geographical and educational landscape and although there were often differences of class,

[16] For example, the first woman elected to Birmingham School Board was the Quaker and suffragist Eliza Sturge; both Elizabeth and Geraldine Cadbury chaired sub-committees of the Education Committee of Birmingham City Council as co-opted members; from 1923 the Quaker Theodora Mary Wilson was an elected Labour woman city councillor for Selly Oak and chaired the Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-committee.
[17] Woodbrooke was formally a Quaker institution, whilst the others were Quaker founded and largely Quaker led.
[18] George J. Barnsby, *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country 1850-1939* (Wolverhampton: Integrated Publishing Services, 1998), 219.
[19] Ibid., 223.

and a broad range of ideological and political positions were represented among their members, there was also considerable crossover and collaboration between them as illustrated by Bradbeer's biography above. A number of leading members in the city's Independent Labour Party (ILP) branches, for example, were Quakers, and the city's first woman Labour City Councillor and first woman member of the TASCOS board, the former teacher Mary Ellen Cottrell, lived in Bournville and co-operated with Quaker women on a number of social welfare and educational initiatives. Crucially for the purposes of this article, they shared a belief in education as a force for social change, and increasingly from 1914 onwards, in peace, international friendship and co-operation as key foundations of local and global social justice. This particular educational landscape, therefore, provides an interesting setting for exploring how certain pedagogical interventions and experimental practices evolved and became embedded in a very specific historical context, and furthermore to interrogate how the local circulation of ideas about citizenship and youth interacts with national and transnational discourses.

It was in this particular suburban landscape in south Birmingham that both organisations discussed here took root in the 1910s and 1920s. They shared a common origin in the woodcraft tradition of youth work, initially developed in North America by Ernest Thompson Seton, and from which they developed their own distinctive and differing interpretations. Seton established a group of 'Woodcraft Indians' on his farm in New England in 1902 drawing on perceived traditions and scouting methods indigenous American 'Indians'. His ideas influenced the Quaker naturalist and anthropologist Ernest Westlake who with his son Aubrey, a disillusioned former Scout leader, established the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry at Sidcot Quaker school in Somerset in 1916.[20] Westlake was a ruralist and antimodernist who had grave concerns about the effects of industrial urban civilisation and drew on the theories of psychologist G. Stanley Hall relating to recapitulation,[21] or the belief that each child travelled through the developmental stages of human evolution from savagery to civilisation,

[20] Prynn, op. cit., 80. See also Edgell, D., *The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry 1916–1949 as a New Age Alternative to the Boy Scouts*, 2 vols. (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press Ltd., 1993); Willem van der Eyken and Barry Turner, *Adventures in Education* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975 [1st ed. 1969]); B. Morris 'Woodcraft and Education: The English Woodcraft Chivalry Movement', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 6, no.1 (1974): 27-34.

[21] Prynn, op. cit., 80; Mark Freeman, 'Muscular Quakerism? The Society of Friends and Youth Organisations in Britain, c. 1900-1950', *English Historical Review* 125, no. 514 (2010): 642-69; van der Eyken and Turner, op. cit..

and that for children to develop naturally they needed to experience the primitive.[22] Hall also linked recapitulation to 'primitive' peoples, leading to a popular fashion for 'playing Indian' in woodcraft based youth organisations. The Westlakes' attraction to woodcraft reflects Mark Freeman's argument that Quakers were looking to make a distinctive contribution to youth work, combining character building and social service with a pacifist and internationalist outlook in this period.[23] Hitherto it has been the Westlakes' Order of Woodcraft Chivalry which is usually cited as the first adoption of American woodcraft traditions by British Quakers. However, another organisation was introduced to Britain by Quaker women a few years earlier, when the Camp Fire Girls arrived in Bournville.

The Camp Fire Girls: 'mothers of the new generation'

> In each generation youth is challenged in new ways; more intelligence is demanded and more independence given. The girl must take an equal share with the boy, but her fundamental nature together with the training of the past ages point to the fact that the share must be different from that of her brother. Each must give the best so that the combine is unique and fuller than the contribution offered by either party.[24]

The Camp Fire Girls (CFG) was formed in 1910 by the American educators Charlotte and Dr Luther Gulick. It was a highly gendered organisation which promoted a model of citizenship for girls based on maternalism, domesticity and personal service, combined with mysticism, elaborate ritual and ceremony. By the 1920s it had become the most popular organisation for girls in the USA and expanded internationally to nearly 30 countries including England.[25] Two Camp Fires named Kienach and St. Bride were established in Bournville in 1912 as part of the youth work of Bournville Sunday School and Westhill Training College for Sunday School

[22] See Abigail A. van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). For a gender critique of Hall's ideas see Dyhouse, op. cit..

[23] Freeman, 'Muscular Quakerism?', 654; see also Mark Freeman, 'Fellowship, Service and the "Spirit of Adventure": The Religious Society of Friends and the Outdoors Movement in Britain, c. 1900-1950', *Quaker Studies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 72-92.

[24] Camp Fire Girls, *British Camp Fire Girls* (London: Camp Fire Girls, 1933), 11.

[25] Jennifer Helgren, '"Homemaker' can include the world": Female Citizenship and Internationalism in the Postwar Camp Fire Girls', in Jennifer Helgren and Colleen A. Vasconcellos, eds., *Girlhood: A Global History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 304-22. See also Helen Buckler, Mary F. Fiedler and Martha F. Allen, *Wo-He-Lo: The Story of the Camp Fire Girls, 1910-1960* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961).

Workers.[26] As the founding narrative of the British movement explained, it was 'from Bournville [that] the news was spread abroad' and gradually other British Camp Fires were established.[27] However, the organisation never grew sufficiently to challenge the domination of established girls' organisations in the UK, and by 1935 it remained a small organisation of 2,500 girls organised in 157 Gamp Fires and 44 junior 'Bluebird' groups.[28]

Bournville Sunday School, although formally non-denominational, was organised under the auspices of the Bournville Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. It was a model demonstration school for Westhill Training College, established in Selly Oak by local Quakers in 1907 as part of a drive to reform and professionalise British Sunday school teaching. In 1912 Westhill sent a lecture party to Australia, New Zealand and Canada to disseminate its pedagogical model.[29] The party included Ethel Archibald and Margaret Backhouse, both of whom were closely connected to the Sunday school and to Westhill, and had a keen interest in the education of adolescent girls. Ethel was a member of Westhill's teaching staff and the daughter of its principal, the Canadian Sunday school reformer George Hamilton Archibald.[30] Born in Newfoundland in 1882, Ethel came to England with her parents in 1902 and trained at the Froebel Institute. Although not formally members of the Society of Friends until 1926, the Archibald family moved in Quaker circles in Selly Oak and Bournville.[31] Margaret was born into a wealthy Quaker banking family in Darlington in 1887. She had arrived in Birmingham in September 1907 as one of the 13 inaugural students at Westhill, and although she returned home in 1908 she remained in close contact with Ethel and was invited

[26] Minutes of Bournville Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, BA&C, SF/3/3/1/1, November 1913 and November 1914.
[27] *Camp Fire Journal* , November 1934, 62, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London (hereafter FL), Temp MSS 370.
[28] Madeline Rooff, *Youth and Leisure: A Survey of Girls' Organisations in England and Wales* (Edinburgh: National Council of Girls' Clubs, 1935), 13-14.
[29] Westhill's mission was to reform Sunday school teaching and religiously inspired youth work in the UK and its curriculum included the psychology of adolescence and practical club work with boys and girls, see Sian Roberts, 'Encounter, exchange and inscription: the personal, the local and the transnational in the educational humanitarianism of two Quaker women', *History of Education* 42, no. 6 (2013): 783-802.
[30] For more on Archibald and Westhill see Ethel Archibald Johnston, *George Hamilton Archibald: Crusader for Youth* (Wallington: The Religious Education Press Ltd., 1945).
[31] Minutes of Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting, Central England Quakers' Archives, BA&C, SF/2/1/1/1/1/31, 14 December 1926. Ethel taught at Westhill for many years apart from a brief stint in the Quaker Mission in Pemba, East Africa, with her husband Andrew Johnston whom she married in 1922 and where she ran a school before returning to her lecturing post at Westhill.

to join the lecture tour as a demonstrator of method. Margaret formally returned to Westhill, and to Bournville Sunday school, as a member of staff in 1915.[32]

On the journey home from the lecture tour Ethel and Margaret read an article about the CFG, a moment which both women later captured in autobiographical accounts. In her account Ethel recalled their immediate reaction that it 'would be ideal for Bournville girls'.[33] Margaret (or Meluit to use her ceremonial name), who became the British CFG's first national president until 1934, maintained that its appeal lay in its originality and distinctiveness from existing provision, writing that it 'seemed to us much better worked out than Girl Guides – which at that time was a copy of Boy Scouts.'[34] Part of the attraction for both women lay in the emphasis of service and its specifically gendered model of citizenship rooted in a Christian ethos. The minutes of Bournville Sunday school committee articulated the new organisation's defining mission:

> As in the case of the boys, the object of this organisation is character building. It is not intended primarily to amuse, but rather to help the young people to fill spare moments with useful pursuits and service for others.[35]

The early groups were closely connected to the organisation in the USA, and like its American parent the British CFG promoted a highly gendered model of citizenship and service which built on an essentialised perception of a girl's distinctive qualities.[36] The 'credo' recounted by the girls reminded them of their 'responsibility as a citizen of a great nation' and their 'glory

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[32] Minutes of Bournville Meeting, BA&C, SF/3/3/1/1, November 1915. For more on Margaret's life as an educationist and humanitarian see Siân Roberts, 'Backhouse, Margaret Ann (1887-1977)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/103381

[33] Johnston, op. cit., 134.

[34] Autobiographical account, Margaret Backhouse Papers, FL, Temp MSS 10868. It was customary for both the adult organisers and young members of the CFG to adopt a ceremonial name.

[35] Annual report of Sunday School, February 1914, Minutes of Bournville Meeting, BA&C, SF/3/3/1/1; I have written in more detail about how the Camp Fire related to the women's Christian and Quaker faith in Siân Roberts '"A new sense of God": British Quakers, citizenship and the adolescent girl in the interwar period', in *The Bloomsbury Reader in Religion and Childhood*, eds. A. Strhan, S. Parker and S. Ridgley, (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2017), 201-13.

[36] Helgren, op. cit., 305-06. The American organiser Edith Kempthorne visited the UK and an article in the *Sunday School Chronicle* in 1921 describes her 'spreading the gospel of the Camp Fire' and holding a training course for guardians at which both Ethel and Margaret were present, see "Ideals Round the Camp Fire. A Chat with Miss E.M. Kempthorne, Field Secretary of the Camp Fire Girls' Movement in America", *The Sunday School Chronicle and Christian Outlook*, 13 October 1921, 612, Cadbury Research Library (CRL), D73; 'The Camp Fire Girls. An American Movement', *The Manchester Guardian,* 23 September 1921, 4. Margaret and her lifelong companion Norah Ackerely, British CFG secretary, later visited Camp Fires in the USA in 1924 and 1926. Norah was also a Quaker and a former Westhill student.

as one of the mothers of the new generation.'[37] This required the development of healthy girl citizens, who were physically fit but also spiritually, morally and psychologically healthy. Like the Girl Guides, nature and the outdoors had a fundamental part to play in the informal programme of training necessary to achieve this.[38] The CFG programme was organised in seven 'crafts', which included learning in nature lore and camp craft in addition to home craft, health craft, hand craft, business, and citizenship.[39] The national handbook, published during Margaret's presidency, provides an insight into how these aims were to be achieved, and although recapitulation theory is not alluded to directly there are occasional echoes of it in claims such as '[t]he exhilaration that the open air life gives, comes from laying aside civilisation and temporarily yielding to the call of the primitive that is in everyone.'[40]

Every group's programme included activities undertaken in the open air and detailed guidance was given on hiking, tracking and following trails. Engaging in nature lore was 'vital, [as] it stimulates a love of beauty, awakens sympathy, brings understanding of the laws of life, arouses wonder and awe and so opens new channels for communion with God.'[41] Girls were encouraged to keep nature diaries to record personal observations to share with the broader group. Observing the progress of nesting birds or 'thrilling' insect biographies, for example, were all good introductions to the laws of life.[42] Urban girls could also access the natural world through keeping window boxes or potted plants, and winter evenings could be spent star gazing. To ensure nature lore was enjoyable as well as educational an element of play was introduced through nature games such as 'flower tag', 'seed hunt', 'tree snap' and the 'feeling or smelling game' which involved using the senses to identify natural objects.[43]

In common with other girls' organisations in the period, the primary site for producing the female citizen of the future was the camp, and camping was an activity which all members were encouraged to undertake even if only for a few nights. Each group was led by a 'Guardian of the Fire' and camp provided the ideal opportunity 'for really living with her girls,

[37] Tahi Trubulo Record Book, Papers of Nellie Jackson, FL, Temp MSS 370.
[38] See Alexander, op. cit..
[39] Camp Fire Girls, op. cit..
[40] Ibid., 67.
[41] Ibid., 70.
[42] Ibid., 71.
[43] Ibid..

and obtaining insight into their characters'.[44] Camping also encouraged the girls to get know each other, to develop teamworking and co-operative skills, and it provided the most appropriate backdrop for Council Fires and other ceremonial activities. It was fundamental for a healthy life and provided the ideal opportunity to introduce the girls to good health habits, away from the influence of home.[45] The guardian should be familiar with the girls' medical histories, and every camper had to keep a daily health chart which tabulated diet, fresh air, sleep and exercise. Camp was also a key site for inculcating the CFG's maternalist and domestic ideology whilst simultaneously providing a girl with adventure.[46] Outdoor cooking, for example, developed the girls' domestic skills in a challenging environment, whilst also encouraging co-operative team work.[47] The Bournville groups were keen campers, and the Sunday school minutes tell us that during Easter 1915 seven of the 32 members were camping out at Rubery, a few miles away.[48] The following August a group of 11 girls camped in Dryderdale near Durham for a fortnight, where 'perfect weather enabled the girls to enjoy a real out-of-door life, and to gain much experience on Camp Craft and Nature Lore.'[49] The learning facilitated at camp complemented that inherent in their regular programme of activities such as gathering blackberries to make jelly to sell in aid of good causes, playing hockey, attending health lectures from a local nurse, sewing clothes for Belgian refugees and giving public demonstrations.

As archival evidence for the Bournville groups is scant, and comprises of rare fragmentary traces, I am reliant on artefacts and documents created by two groups associated with congregational churches in the Lewisham area of London for further evidence of the role played by the camp in the girls' experiences. Established by Nellie Jackson (Mora-itai), Margaret's successor as national president from 1934, the groups produced artefacts which illustrate the significant role played by material culture in the communal and ceremonial life of the camp, and in reinforcing the girls learning.[50] The girls studied 'business craft' which was

[44] Ibid., 81.
[45] Ibid., 82.
[46] van Slyck, op. cit..
[47] Camp Fire Girls, op. cit., 74.
[48] Annual report of Sunday School, November 1915, and February 1914, Minutes of Bournville Meeting, BA&C, SF/3/3/1/1.
[49] Annual report of Sunday School, November 1916, Minutes of Bournville Meeting, BA&C, SF/3/3/1/1.
[50] Papers of Nellie Jackson, FL, Temp MSS 370. These are preserved alongside the surviving ceremonial costumes, moccasins, head dresses, beads, jewellery and other handcrafts donated by Margaret to the Friends' Library in London, Papers of Nellie Jackson, FL, Temp MSS 370.

designed to equip them as future leaders of women's organisations and this placed a strong emphasis on record keeping. Each group was expected to make and maintain its own collective memory in the form of a 'Count or Record Book' in which the girls should express their experiences creatively through writing, drawing and photography. The aim was to create 'not only a comprehensive record of the group, but a work of art, beautiful to handle, and of absorbing interest.'[51] Two intricate and beautiful examples survive from Nellie's groups in the 1920s and early 1930s; one made by the Tahi Trubulo Camp Fire is bound in thick velvet material, whilst that of the Lehiro Tanda is bound in leather with embossed symbols on the cover.[52] Both objects reflect all aspects of the groups' communal life and activities, including the ceremonial names and symbols chosen by the girls, ranks and honours gained, and explanations of their creeds, principles, and ethos. They functioned as a means through which the girls made meaning of their experiences, and camping and the outdoors feature prominently in their pages with numerous photographs and drawings not only documenting activities but capturing the symbolic significance of nature and the camp. The images, often annotated with explanatory comments and memories, illustrate happy hours spent hiking or gathering nature samples, posing beside tents, cooking over the open fire, or doing the washing up. In addition to capturing and reinforcing memories for those girls who were able to participate in camp life, the record books were also a means of communicating the lessons learnt during camp to less fortunate girls who could not afford to attend, and a device that enabled them to share to some limited extent in camp culture.

The artefacts also indicate the importance of handcrafts to the Camp Fire's programme and ethos, together with its emphasis on creativity, imagination, and what another Quaker youth worker referred to as 'colour and healthy romance'.[53] It is this latter element of ritual and ceremony that differentiates the CFG from other girls' organisations such as the Guides, which shared the focus on nature and camping. It also shared the combination of a conservative gender ideology with a modern approach to adventure and conventionally masculine activities, reflecting the 'conservative modernity' described by Alison Light as a

[51] Camp Fire Girls, op. cit. , 51.
[52] Tahi Trubulo and Lehiro Tanda Record Books, Papers of Nellie Jackson, FL, Temp MSS 370.
[53] May Harris, 'The British Camp Fire Girls', *The Wayfarer: A Record of Quaker Life and Work* 11, no. 8 (1932): 144-45.

feature of this period.[54] Although the Guides' programme also included ceremony and drew on some elements of woodcraft, the CFG wholeheartedly embraced the tradition referred to as 'playing Indian', and the adoption of elaborate ritual, 'primitive' costume and material culture contributed to their ceremonial mysticism, a trait noted by the author of a survey of youth organisations in the period who described the Camp Fire as a small organisation that appealed 'to the romantic and emotional tendencies of girls through an elaborate ritualism'.[55] As Sharon Wall has argued, this cultural appropriation was rarely historically accurate, relying rather on perceived invented traditions. Moreover, it was the more feminine aspects of 'Indian' culture and handcrafts that were emphasised in woodcraft organisations aimed at girls.[56] Margaret argued that 'the period of adolescence is the time, above all others, when the feminine side of a girls' nature is developing', and in an ever-developing, over civilised world girls required a means of infusing tedious domestic tasks with 'novelty and romance'.[57] An article describing a ceremonial Camp Fire held by Ethel emphasised the attraction of the Camp Fire:

> One told of her love of poetry, and the way in which the movement satisfied her craving for poetry and beauty and romance. Others told how camping brought a new joy into life, how the Camp Fire helped the all-round development of the bookish girl, the girl who has so much that she is blasé, but does not realise her responsibilities, the city girl who is starved of Nature [sic], beauty and poetry.[58]

A beautiful, natural environment was essential to develop creative and imaginative capacities that would offset the intellectual privations of an industrial age, and produce independence and critical thinking as a basis for female citizenship:

> 'It has already been noted that to-day is an age of mechanical appliances, and that at first it may seem as if the practical has crowded out the imaginative. All scientific

[54] Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, literature and conservatism between the wars* (London: Routledge, 1991); Edwards, op cit., 8.
[55] A.E. Morgan, *Young Citizen* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1943), 123-4. On the Guides see Alexander, op. cit.; Edwards, op. cit..
[56] Wall, op. cit., 220, 233.
[57] Margaret A. Backhouse, 'British Camp Fire Girls', *The Wayfarer: A Record of Quaker Life and Work* 5, no. 11 (1926): 181-82.
[58] Elsie Robins, 'Camp Fire in the "Canny North"', *The Sunday School Chronicle and Christian Outlook*, 27 October 1921, CRL, NCEC D73.

> progress has depended upon controlled imagination, and the present-day youth has an ample supply of imagination, which needs to be harnessed for the benefit of this world. This harnessed imagination has produced great scientists, artists, reformers, explorers; indeed, all the progressive people the world has known. The lack of it has produced millions of people who behave as their forefathers have behaved, who talk as their neighbours or newspapers talk, and have become the parasites of society. Camp Fire wants its girls to belong to the first class, even though many can only be the lesser lights, and it plans to stimulate imagination by dramatics, creative expression by handcraft and writing, symbolism, original record keeping and social service.'[59]

Individuality and independent thinking, albeit within a disciplined collective context, was connected to the other significant difference which Margaret drew with the Guides, the CFG's democracy and lack of military ethos. Quakerism had a long standing history of objection to war and militarism, a characteristic which was reinvigorated and strengthened during the First World War.[60] Writing in 1926 Margaret laid great emphasis on the non-military aspect of the movement:

> Lastly, the Camp Fire programme claims to train for good citizenship because it is free from anything military. It uses no military terms nor insignia, it does not provide for formal exercise by the use of military drill, but by means of organized expeditions and games, and the sharing of home responsibilities, it teaches co-operation and teamwork and what is more important, disciplined individuality.[61]

The interwar period saw an active debate about the extent of the militarisation of the Guides and their male counterparts the Boy Scouts.[62] Although historians have disagreed about the extent to which the movements reflected a military ethos, there is no doubt that the Quaker founders of Westhill found this aspect problematic.[63] In addition to the CFG, Westhill staff

[59] Camp Fire Girls, op. cit., 12-3.
[60] Thomas C. Kennedy, 'The Quaker Renaissance and the Origins of the Modern British Peace Movement, 1895-1920', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 16, no. 3 (1984): 243-72. Despite this tradition not every Quaker was pacifist as the First World War demonstrated.
[61] Backhouse, op. cit., 181-82.
[62] Alexander, op. cit., 158, 162; see also Edwards, op. cit..
[63] Freeman has argued Friends' attitude towards 'military virtues' in the mainstream youth movement of the period was complex and members of the Society held a broader range of views on this matter than is sometimes assumed to be the case, see Mark Freeman, 'Muscular Quakerism'.

had developed a group of 'Peace Scouts' for local boys, and the Westhill committee that approved its formation went so far as to specify that it had to be 'anti-military' and should not be directed by, or connected to, Baden-Powell.[64] The democratic nature of the CFG was also emphasised by Margaret, partly because the aim was 'to train leadership', and presumably to contrast it with the more autocratic Guide movement.[65]

However, the CFG held similar views to the Guides on the question of patriotism and service to Empire, despite the fact that Quaker youth workers might conventionally have been expected to exhibit a more anti-imperialist perspective. The handbook, for example, reflects the discourse of 'imperial internationalism' discussed by Alexander in relation to the Guides, and describes how Camp Fire groups might celebrate Empire Day with a special ceremony to 'show loyalty to King and Empire.'[66] The ceremony was complete with Union Jack, the rendition of *Land of Hope and Glory* and *Dear Motherland of England*, and a speech in which the officiating Guardian and girls saluted the flag representing 'the principles of equity, freedom and justice upon which that Empire is built.'[67] We can also read an element of imperial thinking and related discourses of racialised cultural superiority in their unreflective and uncritical adoption of 'primitive' culture.[68] These were discourses which south Birmingham co-operative and labour activists found more difficult to accommodate, and they sought a far more radical answer to citizenship education for the young.

The Woodcraft Folk: 'education towards social change'[69]

> The capitalists, militarists and imperialists have discovered the best means to capture and train the child mind, and their organisations are full of glamour, adventure and colour. The fault lies greatly in the fact that many parents do not realise that we, too,

[64] Westhill College, Minute book, 23 October 1913, CRL, Westhill Archive box 61A. Robert Baden-Powell was the founder of the Boy Scout movement.
[65] Backhouse, op. cit., 181-182; on autocracy in the Guides see Alexander, op. cit..
[66] Alexander, op. cit., 164; Camp Fire Girls, *British Camp Fire Girls* (London: Camp Fire Girls, 1933), 204.
[67] Camp Fire Girls, op. cit. , 205.
[68] For a critique of this element in the American CFG see van Slyck, op. cit..
[69] Leslie Paul, *The Republic of Children: a handbook for teachers of working-class children* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1938), 48.

have an organisation that has all these attractions, but without the militarist and imperialist training. That organisation is the Woodcraft Folk.[70]

In 1929 TASCOS established a local fellowship of the Woodcraft Folk.[71] The Folk had emerged in 1925 as a secular and co-educational alternative to militaristic uniformed youth organisations, and was closely affiliated to the co-operative movement.[72] It was developed initially as a breakaway group from the Kibbo Kift Kindred, a woodcraft movement with a pacifist and internationalist outlook developed by John Hargrave in 1920.[73] A number of Kindred branches were formed under the auspices of co-operative societies in south London until Hargrave's increasingly autocratic and anti-democratic leadership style led to a breach in 1924. It was one of these disaffected Kindred, Leslie Paul, who subsequently formed the 'Wayfarers Fellowship' in 1925 and later that year the group was formally renamed Woodcraft Folk (the Federation of Co-operative Woodcraft Fellowships) with twenty year old Paul (Little Otter) as its 'headman'.[74] Paul had been an enthusiastic Scout as a boy, and became passionately interested in education for working class children authoring several books outlining his theories.[75]

Although archival material for the TASCOS Folk is scarce, the group was promoted in local TASCOS publications and these articles provide a clear indication of the attraction of the movement for local co-operative and labour activists.[76] The TASCOS handbook in 1934, for

[70] Extract from Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society, *The Wheatsheaf*, March 1937, included in a volume of newscuttings, Woodcraft Folk Archives, UCL Institute of Education Archives (hereafter IoE), YMA/WF/121.
[71] Ned Williams, *The Co-op in Birmingham and the Black Country* (Wolverhampton: Uralia Press, 1993),104-5. Williams states that for four years in the early 1930s the group called itself the 'TASCOS Youth Group', reverting back to the name Woodcraft Folk in 1935.
[72] Sarah Mills, '"A Powerful Educational Instrument": The Woodcraft Folk and Indoor/Outdoor "Nature", 1925-75', in *Informal Education, Childhood and Youth: Geographies, Histories, Practices*, eds. Sarah Mills and Peter Kraftl (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 65-78; Mary Davis, *Fashioning a New World: A History of the Woodcraft Folk* (Loughborough: Holyoake Books, 2000).
[73] Prynn, op. cit., 81-2.
[74] Ibid., 82.
[75] Paul was Headman of the Folk until 1934 when he became National President and was succeeded by the socialist Basil Rawson (Brown Eagle) from Sheffield, see "Paul, Leslie Allen (1905-1985), author and college teacher" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-31532 (accessed 6 August 2018).
[76] At the time of writing local branch records have not been located for the TASCOS Folk. Some Birmingham Folk records were formerly held at the Birmingham and Midland Institute but these were removed at some point after 2000 when their presence there was noted by Mertens, op. cit..

example, published the Folk's charter, the first 'aspiration' of which outlined the role of nature in the organisation's philosophy:

> To develop in ourselves, for the service of the people, mental and physical health, and communal responsibility, by camping out and living in close contact with nature, by using the creative faculty both of our minds and our hands, and by sincerity in all our dealings with our neighbours.[77]

The charter goes on to list other characteristics to which members should aspire including a knowledge of world history and human development, an understanding that the welfare of the broader community could only be secure 'when the instruments of production are owned by the community', and a desire to see the end of all means of the destruction of life. The entry concluded with a note that the local group met at the Co-operative Rooms in Stirchley every Monday. A year later in 1935 the Society's handbook listed five such groups in various TASCOS centres.[78]

From the beginning, therefore, the Folk was overtly political and was securely rooted in class and co-operative politics, perceiving itself as an educational movement to train working class youth in a socialist conceptualisation of citizenship. An article in the TASCOS magazine, *The Wheatsheaf* makes explicit the nature of the child citizen that the Folk aimed to produce. Written by White Eagle (identified as a Mr. S. Hurd of Leicester) headman of the regional group, the Midland Kin, the article explained that until the advent of the Folk, the co-operative movement had been missing a great opportunity by allowing its children to be attracted to 'anti-co-operative' organisations such as the Scouts and the Guides. He explained:

> Co-operators prefer to be internationalists, lovers of peace and freedom, but, sad to say, many co-operative children belong to one or another of these other movements, which, in the main, are actuated by a strong sense of patriotism or bigoted

[77] Extract from the charter of the Woodcraft Folk quoted in the Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society Handbook, 1934, BA&C, L62.53/436044, 52-3.
[78] Extract from the charter of the Woodcraft Folk quoted in the Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society Handbook, 1935, BA&C, L62.53/452811, 54-5.

> nationalism, and are controlled by ex-soldiers or ex-sailors who are not calculated to promote peaceful views.[79]

His article was accompanied by photographs of the TASCOS group at a weekend camp, happily engaged in healthy outdoor communal activities. Similar sentiments appeared in another article in March 1937 where 'T.S.' railed against the fact that co-operative children were 'growing up in the many reactionary and imperialistic organisations', and lamented that after eleven years the Folk membership stood at 4,000 whilst the 'anti-co-operatives' had a membership of 1,500,000. Like the CFG earlier, the article emphasised the lack of military drill and explained that the 'officer caste' had been replaced by 'democratic control'. This was complemented by a programme of 'planned education' which developed self-knowledge, an international outlook, and independent thinking. There was no compulsory religious ceremony, and the programme included drama, art, dancing, the principles and history of working-class movements, and the teaching of 'Socialism, co-operation and peace.'[80]

Both articles regret the attraction of 'reactionary' movements for working class children, primarily through their promotion of an exposure to the natural world and camping. In addition to its role in attracting members, the Folk's advocates were also mindful of the health benefits for urban working class children, and ideologically committed to their right to share in the enjoyment of the nation's natural and rural inheritance. A year after the second article was published, Leslie Paul expanded on this theme in his book, *The Republic of Children,* arguing:

> We hold that children who see little of the countryside suffer not only in health but through general spiritual impoverishment.
>
> It is not part of our plea that town life has no value, and that we should all "go back to Nature," but we do think that a life deprived of contact with soil and sun and growing things is likely to be starved and lopsided. The richness and variety of the countryside should be as much part of the heritage of the working-class child as the thronging city streets.[81]

[79] Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society, *The Wheatsheaf*, July 1934, BA&C, L62.53, viii-xi.
[80] Extract from Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society, *The Wheatsheaf*, March 1937, included in a volume of newscuttings, Woodcraft Folk Archives, IoE, YMA/WF/121.
[81] Paul, op. cit., 222-3.

The TASCOS Folk's enthusiasm for camping can be gleaned from the pages of *The Wheatsheaf* and the national records of the Folk. In March 1937, for example, the local groups were looking forward to summer camp and making preparations for it by crafting a totem pole with the assistance of Mr. Haines, known as Woodpecker.[82] Olive Pulser, a local Folk member who joined in 1933, recalled the significant part camping played in the Folk's calendar in the 1930s and 1940s, commenting that 'we went camping more or less EVERY weekend – it was a major part of our lives.'[83] In contrast to the CFG, the Woodcraft groups were co-educational and despite Paul's assurances that no distinction was made between men and women or boys and girls, there is some evidence of gender differentiation.[84] In April 1937, for example, the Stirchley girls were making calendars whilst the boys made kaleidoscopes, indicating that gendered assumptions about the appropriateness of certain handcraft activities for girls, due to the nature of the materials, equipment and skills required, were at play.[85]

As might be expected, much less is known about the working class adults who led the Folk in south Birmingham than the CFG leaders as they left fewer autobiographical records. However, brief portraits of three key individuals, gleaned from biographical fragments, will give some indication of the background and beliefs of local supporters. One key supporter was Tom Hackett who represented the Co-operative Union's national educational committee on the Folk's national executive in the 1930s.[86] Born in 1869 he was a longstanding member of the TASCOS Education Committee, serving as its chairman from 1907-1923, and was involved in local adult education initiatives including the Workers Educational Association (WEA) and Fircroft College.[87] A Cadbury employee and resident of Bournville, he was elected as a Labour City Councillor in 1913 and stood unsuccessfully as a Labour candidate in the 1918 general election when he was ridiculed in the local press for his conscientious objection.[88]

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[82] Extract from Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society, *The Wheatsheaf*, March 1937, included in a volume of newscuttings, Woodcraft Folk Archives, IoE, YMA/WF/121.
[83] Olive Pulser quoted in Williams, op. cit., 196 [emphasis in the original].
[84] Paul, op. cit., 55-6.
[85] Extract from Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society, *The Wheatsheaf*, April 1937, included in a volume of newscuttings, Woodcraft Folk Archives, IoE, YMA/WF/121.
[86] Minutes of National Folk Council, IoE, YMA/WF/26A and 27.
[87] Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society Handbook, 1934, BA&C, L62.53/436044; Jim Ranahan, *A Meeting of Minds: adult education in south-west Birmingham, 1900-1940* (Birmingham: Suburban Birmingham project, 2011) available at http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/sb-meeting-of-minds-print.pdf
[88] *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 30 January 1933, 8; a report in the *Birmingham Daily Post* on 11 December 1918, for example, quoted an opponent maintaining that a vote for Hackett was a vote for the Germans.

Hackett was connected to the local groups and in August 1934, for example, he visited a local camp and lectured the group on the relationship of the Woodcraft and Co-operative movements.[89] Similar backgrounds are evident in the biographies of a married couple who ran one of the TASCOS Woodcraft Folk groups, Alfred William Hood (known as Woodman) and his wife Amy Maud nee Mills (Greenleaf).[90] Alfred was a carpenter and joiner who chaired the Weoley Castle committee of TASCOS. He was a member of the Labour and Co-operative parties, and a district organiser for the Peace Ballot organised by the League of Nations Union in 1934-1935. He joined the Folk in 1936, becoming headman of the local group and a national representative from 1940.[91] Less is known about Amy, but she shared his interest in the Folk and both were featured with their young members in a newspaper report in September 1937 together with another helper Mr. Leatherhead (Kijika). The report explained that the TASCOS group had over 100 members at this point, and the aim was to make the young people 'self-reliant and capable'. Rather disingenuously they were quoted as saying that they had 'no political views, but we try to instil into Woodcraft Folk that war is wrong and unnecessary.'[92] The children paid a penny a week to attend meetings where handicraft such as leatherwork, embroidery, and basketwork were taught, together with folk dancing and the singing of international traditional songs. The Folk's interest in nature and the outdoors was emphasised, and readers learned that some of the group were recently returned from an international peace camp.

To provide context for these brief local glimpses I turn to the material which survives at a national level in the form of the promotional material produced by the Folk. The movement published year books detailing its activities, and magazines aimed at child members and adult helpers. Although the extent of their dissemination and readership is unclear it is very probable that some of these publications were circulated locally, particularly in the period when Woodman sat on the Folk's national council. The Folk Year Book of 1928,

[89] Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-operative Society, *The Wheatsheaf*, August 1934, BA&C, L62.53, xiii.
[90] They were both born in 1904 and married in 1933 after which they lived in Selly Oak, biographical details via http://www.ancestry.co.uk (accessed 7 August 2018).
[91] A biographical summary is provided in *The Helper*, February-March 1940, Woodcraft Folk Archives, IoE, YMA/WF/333.
[92] Extract from *Birmingham Sunday Mercury*, 5 September 1937, included in a volume of newscuttings, Woodcraft Folk Archives, IoE, YMA/WF/121.

when the TASCOS activists were presumably considering the formation of a local group, opened with the statement: 'The Folk stand for World Peace and Co-operation, Camping and Handicrafts, Mental and Physical Fitness'.[93] Its pages and those of the magazines reflect the importance ascribed to health and outdoor exercise, particularly communing with nature and camping which are promoted as central features of the Folk's educational programme. The publications abound with accounts of hiking and camping trips, nature articles and stories, and guidance on effective camping. Similarly, the photographs and magazine covers exhibit happy and healthy looking children enjoying a co-operative life in the outdoors. Ironically, despite extensive advocacy of youth self-government, and the benefits of freedom in the great outdoors, the guidance given to the adult helpers reveals that as in other youth organisations camping was a carefully planned and highly regulated activity.[94] Although elements of 'playing Indian' survive, such as the use of totem poles for example, far less emphasis is given to these aspects than in the CFG. There are similarities, however, in the emphasis placed on the development of imagination, romance, and self-expression through creative pursuits. This was a significant element of Paul's educational philosophy, which he summarised in 1935:

> Education should be expression and not suppression […] The normal child loves action and romance: living in the open, wearing a costume, carrying banners and flags, cooking over a wood fire, tracking, tramping and so ad infinitum. When he [sic] does these things, he is educating himself .[95]

He expanded upon this in the journal of the New Education Fellowship, *The New Era*, in 1939, writing that his decision to found the Folk was motivated by a desire to provide working class children with 'a happy, imaginatively organized group life' based on freedom and comradeship, that would develop critical thinking and set the child free 'from the limitations imposed upon it by society.'[96]

[93] Year Book, 1928, IoE, YMA/WF/1.
[94] See for example Alexander op.cit. and Cupers op.cit..
[95] Year Book, '1925-1935, Ten Years of Woodcraft, Souvenir Number', 1935, IoE, YMA/WF/2.
[96] Leslie Paul, "Democracy, Education and Leadership", *The New Era*, April 1939, 93-95.

A similar critique of contemporary society permeates the Folk's publications aimed at adults and children. World co-operation and peace was a significant part of the ideology and the Folk was an overtly pacifist movement which sought alliances with similar organisations, including the No More War Movement in 1929.[97] This was reflected in the content of the magazines aimed at the membership, for example in 1927 the first issue of the new format of *The Herald of the Folk* included a story entitled 'A War Resister in Prison' written by Reginald Stamp of the ILP.[98] The Folk's pacifism complemented the organisation's internationalist outlook which is also strongly reflected in the publications, including its close relationship with the Socialist Educational International (SEI), and its vice-president and founder Kurt Lowenstein.[99] Lowenstein was a frequent contributor to the Folk's publication for adult leaders, *The Helper*, which was published in conjunction with the SEI. *The Helper* included articles on all aspects of knowledge deemed useful for adult leaders including, for example, the principles of successful co-education, adolescent psychology, Esperanto, European working class youth movements, the growth of fascism, and the educational ideas of key thinkers such as A.S. Neil. Lowenstein himself contributed articles on psychological theorists (including Freud and Adler), self-control, and self-government for the young.[100]

Similarly *The Herald of the Folk* and *The Pioneer* (renamed *The New Pioneer* in a larger and glossier format from August 1936) both regularly carried articles on international socialist youth groups, particularly the Austrian Red Falcons, and from 1933-1934 articles on European politics and the rise of fascism, in Europe and in Britain, appear regularly.[101] In contrast to the CFG's celebration of empire, *The Pioneer* of June 1935 discussed 'The Crime of Empire'.[102] Unsurprisingly, the Civil War in Spain received lengthy coverage, as did British campaigns to provide humanitarian relief, and accounts from members of the International Brigades.[103] As

[97] Year Book, 1929-30, IoE YMA/WF/1, p. 2. See also *The Herald of the* Folk, October 1929, 5, IoE, YMA/WF/331. This organisation later amalgamated with the Peace Pledge Union.
[98] *The Herald of the Folk* vol. 1, no. 1, March 1927, 4, IoE, YMA/WF/331.
[99] Year Book, '1925-1935, Ten Years of Woodcraft, Souvenir Number', 1935, IoE YMA/WF/2 includes a summary of the work of the SEI, and explained that it had commenced its work in Germany but also had members in Austria , Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, USA and France, and that the Folk intended to affiliate in the near future.
[100] See issues of *The Helper*, 1936-1938, IoE, YMA/WF/333. In May 1939 *The Helper* printed a notice of Lowenstein's death and the June issue carried a detailed obituary which outlined his work with the Karl Marx School and the International Red Falcons, see *The Helper*, June 1939, IoE, YMA/WF/333.
[101] *The Herald of the Folk*, January and July 1934, IoE, YMA/WF/331.
[102] *The Pioneer*, June 1935, 1-2, IoE, YMA/WF/332.
[103] *The New Pioneer*, July 1938, 276 and September 1938, 6-7, IoE, YMA/WF/332.

the situation in Germany deteriorated *The Pioneer* aimed to present the news in an appropriate way for a young audience, using stories such as 'Heini Red Falcon of Germany' which told of a 12 year old 'who the Nazis could not break'.[104] Powerful photographic imagery was employed, such as in July 1938 when a photograph of dead Spanish children was juxtaposed in a montage with playing children and military aircraft.[105] Similarly, magazine covers featured compelling and intensely political artwork. In April 1937, for example, a cover captioned 'Support the Spanish Workers' depicted a distraught girl holding her head in her hands as military aircraft flew overhead; and in December 1938 symbolic emblems of a happy British Christmas were juxtaposed with the figure of a dejected prisoner behind barbed wire and standing under a Swastika.[106]

Camping was itself reimagined as a political act, intimately connected to the promotion of peace and internationalism, through the international peace camp which taught the young how to live and work together. In 1935 the British Folk had attended the International Falcon Camp in France,[107] and two years later in 1937 it hosted the 'International Children's Republic' camp in Brighton where children and young people from different countries, including the TASCOS delegation, camped together. Two commemorative albums from the camp depict the full range of activities in which they would have participated including sporting and cultural events, the peace festival and other camp ceremonies, and the day to day life of the campers. [108] An adult helper who attended summarised the international camp's importance in that particular historical moment:

> 'The fraternisation between the children and the adults of our different nations was a great feature of the camp and we shall not forget that we all belong to the same working class […] While war and preparation for war were going on all over the world,

[104] *The Pioneer*, July 1938, 278, IoE, YMA/WF/332.
[105] *The New Pioneer*, July 1938, 274-275, IoE, YMA/WF/332.
[106] *The New Pioneer*, April 1937 and December 1938, front cover, IoE, YMA/WF/332.
[107] Report in volume of newscuttings, Woodcraft Folk Archives, IoE, YMA/WF/121.
[108] See commemorative photograph album available online at https://heritage.woodcraft.org.uk/archive/item/a-pictorial-record-of-the-international-camp-held-at-brighton/; and 'Hazel' of Wembley's private commemorative album available at https://heritage.woodcraft.org.uk/archive/item/wembley-memories-of-the-international-childrens-camp-brighton/?page=1 (accessed 6 August 2018). See also Edwards, op. cit., 232-33.

2,000 children of eight different countries were living for three weeks a life of their ideals and hopes.'[109]

Conclusion: Reimagining local and global worlds

Both of the youth organisations discussed in this article utilised the natural world as a local pedagogical space in which to informally educate future citizens. A rural environment was perceived by both sets of activist as crucial for developing physically and psychologically healthy individuals who would work collectively to attain a better world in the aftermath of the First World War. It was in the natural environment that the young would develop the necessary skills, attributes, and qualities that would equip them to play active roles in their communities as adults. In this both groups had much in common with the mainstream youth organisations of the period. However, despite similarities in pedagogy and practice, there were also crucial differences in how the young citizen was conceptualised, borne out of the particular educational, religious, and political beliefs of the participating adults. The most conservative of the organisations discussed, the Camp Fire Girls, shared mainstream understandings of gender differentiation. However, it was a modern gender conservatism that was articulated alongside a vision of an extended leadership role for women in the public sphere, and a belief that creative critical thinking, rooted in understandings of collective democracy, collaborative working, peace and international friendship, was essential for effective female service for the good of society. This was to be achieved by appreciating the specific psychology of the adolescent girl, and capitalising on her perceived desire for romance, colourful ritual, and adventure in the open air. The outdoor camp functioned as the ideal site in which to inculcate the attributes and qualities, or in Margaret Backhouse's words the 'right habits' that were considered essential for 'right living'.[110] In contrast, the political activists of the local co-operative and labour movement seized upon the far more radical Woodcraft Folk as a means to produce a critically astute and politically active child citizen, one who would work within a class-based, pacifist and socialist international to achieve change locally and globally. Here again the natural world, and the camp in particular, doubles as both a site of healthy attraction for the working class child, and a space in which that child

[109] *The Helper*, August 1937, IoE, YMA/WF/333.
[110] Backhouse, op.cit., 181-2.

could learn to live differently, engaging imaginatively with its physical environment and working co-operatively with others to reimagine the social order.

This picture emerges from fragmentary glimpses in local records interweaved with broader understandings of the organisations gleaned from national collections, which are themselves relatively sparse. Exploring the local and the national together illuminates our understanding of how the national rhetoric of youth citizenship was translated into practice in politicised spaces at the local level. However, a consequence of this archival fragmentation is that a number of questions remain unanswered and await further research. How effective were the organisations in inculcating the particular beliefs and behaviours in their young members? To what extent did the local groups and their members subscribe to the ideological perspectives articulated in the organisational narratives? Did they resist or subvert the understandings of class and gender inherent in the ethos of both organisations? What, if any, legacies did the Camp Fire and the Folk leave on the local stages of women's and co-operative activism? These questions notwithstanding, this article has demonstrated why these alternative youth movements appealed to the educational and political activists who inhabited a particular geographical and cultural setting in south Birmingham, and how mapping the ideologies and practices that played out in this landscape contribute to our understanding of the contested geographies of informal citizenship pedagogy for the young in the interwar period.